

Corporate Construction
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April 14, 2016

The Honorable Anthony R. Foxx
Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, DC 20590

**RE: FY2016 TIGER Discretionary Grant
I-579 "Cap" Urban Connector Project**

Dear Secretary Foxx,

I am writing in support of The Sports & Exhibition Authority of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County (SEA) submission of an application for a FY2016 TIGER Discretionary Grant ("TIGER VII"). The SEA is requesting TIGER VII funds to help pay for construction costs of I-579 "Cap" Urban Connector (I-579 "Cap").

The "Cap" structure will span over the Interstate 579 Crosstown Boulevard highway creating a new urban public connector that will create a safe, accessible connection for walking and biking between the Hill District and Downtown. ADA pedestrian and bicycle pathways, stormwater management and other sustainable strategies, landscaping and other fixed site components will create a public urban open space of approximately 3 acres.

As part of urban renewal in the 1950s, the Hill District, then a predominantly African American community was declared blighted; 95 acres were demolished and 8,000 people and 413 businesses were displaced. Since that time it has lost more than 80% of its population and remains a distressed neighborhood with 17.2% unemployment and 39.2% of residents living below the poverty line. This project will reconnect the underserved and disadvantaged Lower Hill District with downtown Pittsburgh and will be an important part in a cohesive corridor between Downtown and Oakland, two large centers of employment, education and essential services.

Important redevelopment has taken place in the vicinity such as the Energy Innovation Center. We expect approximately \$379 million in private investment in the adjacent 28-acre development site of the former Civic Arena as the "Cap" and the other infrastructures are put in place. The "Cap" project will help keep that momentum going and increase its impact in the City and the Hill District.

The I-579 "Cap" will utilize green infrastructure strategies, including capturing the majority of storm water on the site. Plants and trees will be native or adapted, and this new open space will add to the city's urban forest cover. This new greenspace will contribute to the reduction of urban heat island effects, and will mitigate noise.

The project strongly aligns with US DOT's priorities and "ladders of opportunity" by:

- ✓ the creation of new and safe connections needed to reconnect people from an economically distressed neighborhood (Hill District) to centers of employment, education and critical services (downtown central business district and Oakland),
- ✓ the promotion of workforce development for underserved people
- ✓ contributing to community revitalization
- ✓ providing a safe connection for pedestrians and bicyclists to connect to a free transit network in Downtown / North Shore including light rail transit (LRT) stations and bus stops.

The I-579 "Cap" project is a top regional project with multi-agency partnerships and related stakeholders. I highly recommend funding of this transformative project that will make a difference to the Hill District, one of Pittsburgh's oldest residential neighborhoods.

Sincerely,



Eric Cartwright
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